32: Gilles O,X-3 (1902-c.1910) 1974
NO6 Comanche NO6
Oklahoma

These young Indians had spent less time on horseback and more time inside, out of the weather; nor had they ever ridden the war trails. The women of this group took better care of their hair. The older women's hair generally had an untidy look.

This sullen aloofness and aimless drifting didn't affect the younger children—it seemed to set in when a boy got to be fifteen or sixteen years old. The younger children, when they arrived home on vacation, were bursting with energy. They rode their ponies helter-skelter over the prairies and rivaled the channel cat in Cache Creek with their cavorting, swimming, and diving.

They came to town with their parents—the girls riding in a hack or the little lumber wagon with the women. If it was the wagon, the bows and canvas cover converted it into a little prairie schooner. On a nice day the canvas would be rolled up a ways on either side, to let the air through.

Comanche men and boys never rode in the wagon or hack with the women. The boys would be riding along with their father, horseback. If there were not enough stock saddles to go around, the younger boys would be riding ancient Mexican-type saddles. These Mexican saddles had a flat look, compared to the up-to-date stock saddle. Neither the fork nor the cantle was as high, while the seat was broader. Its most distinguishing feature was the top of the fork. Thin, broad, and round, it made one think of a pancake. I am sure the tops of some of the horns were as much as four inches across.

Somehow, the youngsters always had a few nickels to spend for candy, cakes, and wax—their name for all kinds of chewing gum. The happy parents stood around and glowed in their pride. Sometimes the parents had one of the youngsters show off—they would have one of the boys interpret as they bought their groceries or other store items. They wanted everyone in the store to see how much their children had learned.

But all this youthful, happy exuberance suddenly vanished in the late teens. Few of the girls stayed in school as long as the boys, and the girls never got the good from their Carlisle clothes. About the second or third time they came to the store after their last year in school, they would buy some gay-colored, patterned calico along with matching cotton braid. The next time you saw them, they would be wearing a *pit-si-qui-na*.

The young men did wear out their white man's clothes, but seem-

32: Gilles O,X-3 (1902-c.1910) 1974
NO6 Comanche NO6
Oklahoma

When our store opened for business, we had everything to learn about merchandising, and so we had no customs or inhibitions to overcome. I believe this operated to our advantage, especially with the Indian business. Mother selected our dry goods, and her good taste resulted in our having an attractive array of bolts of calico and gingham. Having observed the Indian women's taste in colors and the way they trimmed their clothes, she bought boxes and boxes of braid to match the colors of the piece goods. This unusual display of dry goods undoubtedly did much to attract the Indian women to our store from the very start.

I soon learned the Comanche words and phrases I needed to wait on them. I had no dictionary—as far as I know, the Comanche words had never been listed and defined. My learning was pretty much catch-as-catch-can. I found I could go a long way with the expression *Osh-a-him.* This can be translated as "What is the Comanche word for this?" or "What is this?" or "Who is that man?" or "Whose horse is this?" or "What is that man's name?" and so on and on and on, by inflection of the voice, pointing, and the use of signs.

Boylike, I was much amused at the women's way of shopping. When a family came into the store to trade, one wife would come to the grocery counter and start buying. She knew exactly what she wanted and the amount she wanted. No matter if she had been to Carlisle, if she wanted fifty cents' worth of sugar she said, "*Pina*—four bits." When I had weighed out the sugar, she paid for it and then asked for the next article, always by its Indian name and in amounts divisible by a bit, or 12½ cents. Money to the Comanches was two bits, four bits, six bits, dollar, dollar two bits, etc. Buying in this fashion would continue until all the first wife's wants were satisfied. Then she would place her purchases in a clean flour sack she had brought along for the purpose, and would rejoin the wife group.

Now a second wife would come to the counter, and in the majority of cases would buy exactly what the first wife had bought—and in identical amounts. Then it was wife number three's turn. The only variation would come when they bought the sweets for the children. Each wife bought for her own children, generally some variety of cookies that we kept on display, under glass to protect them from dirt and flies. Usually the older children had their own money and made their own purchases.

32: Gilles O,X-3 (1902-c.1910) 1974
NO6 Comanche NO6
Oklahoma

When their money ran out before payment time, we would credit those who were not heavy drinkers until the next Grass Money time. Though all merchandise was charged to the husband, the wives bought in the same way. We followed the custom of keeping the sales slip for each wife's purchases with her name, but we were never called upon to show who bought what. I wondered whether the wives had an after-payment settlement.

The women always had a lot of fun buying dry goods. We kept yardsticks laid out along the dry-goods counter so that a woman could point to the particular bolt she was interested in. Each bought for herself and her children; but as each made her choices, the other wife or wives stood by the counter and passed remarks freely about her selections. These remarks always caused much merriment, not only within the group itself but also from other Indian women listening in.

One white custom at which the Comanche women never ceased to wonder was the freedom with which white women would converse with men other than those of their own families. A homesteader's wife who had not talked to anyone but her husband for two weeks would come in plumb full of talk. As she was doing her buying, she would tell me all about the crops, the new calves or colts, and where she and her husband would be driving to church or a picnic the next day. In turn she would want to know all about what happened in town, who had had a baby, who had died, and all the gossip. Meanwhile Indian women who had, I knew, been to Carlisle or Chilocco would be listening very intently and talking in low tones to other women sitting near, apparently describing the conversation.

Comanche men and boys could scarcely help being vain, with all the attention the women and girls of the family bestowed upon them. This was especially apparent when the family as a whole was going to a gathering of any kind, white or Indian. The women would have the finest of shirts and neck scarves prepared for the husband and the boys to wear for the occasion. Often the shirt and bandana would be made from the finest red or pink silk. Nearly all the men wore their hair long, and the husband would sport a new hairdo with strips of otter skin or fancy yarn braided in with the hair to increase the size of the braid. The white sheet that was rolled up and worn around the waist like a sash had been washed and sun-bleached until it was of a dazzling whiteness.

32: Gilles O,X-3 (1902-c.1910) 1974
NO6 Comanche NO6
Oklahoma

ture of him always had him mounting his horse from the left side, white-man fashion; and his daughter, Mrs. Cato, says that my memory is correct. The Spaniards had been the Comanches' riding teachers, and because in Spain a horse is mounted from the right side, the Comanches mounted from the right. Charley Ross, however, learned from the Burnett cowboys to mount from the left. From them he also must have learned to train his saddle horse to the ground hitch, in which the rider drops his reins to the ground and the horse stands until the reins are picked up again. As far as I know, this is a cowboy trick.

Certain of Charley's physical characteristics, though they were especially evident when he was swinging on or off his horse, came not from his days on the Burnett ranch, but from his earlier years at Carlisle. A distinguishing feature of the Carlisle Indians, which Charley possessed, was their straight, long legs, which contrasted with the bandy legs of the warrior group. The old fellows showed the effect of a lifetime spent horseback. Also, Charley was typical of the products of the Indian boarding schools in being some inches taller than most of the Comanches of his generation or older, who ranged in height from five feet four inches to five feet six. Charley was five feet ten or eleven inches tall. The balanced diet the students at the schools received, the regular meals, the protection from the elements, and the smaller amount of horseback riding during the growing years probably account for the extra height of both boys and girls and the loss of the bandy look from their legs.

Though Charley was like the rest of the returning Carlisle students in these bodily ways, he was very different from them in his attitudes. It was as though the others shed the school years, and everything connected with them, and shoved it all under a log on West Cache. When they came into our store to make a purchase, they asked for it by its Indian name. They never uttered a word of English if grunting or pointing would get the job done. Nor would they interpret for us, even when it would be to the advantage of an older Indian. For example, one of the older Indians might have a check he had received for the sale of a horse or steer, but he would know nothing but what he had been told concerning its amount. We would be willing to cash the check, but we needed to know that the Indian was aware of the sum named in it. There might be a number of educated young Indians around, but it would be almost impossible to find one

32: Gilles O,X-3 (1902-c.1910) 1974
NO6 Comanche NO6
Oklahoma

to the plant. Should you actually take hold, the tiny spines on the top of each nodule would get you, while if you passed your hand too closely, some of the interlaced spines would be so placed that they would bite. All in all, it was a well-protected cactus, but not a menacing one.

I don't recall how many years Mother kept the cactus sitting on the little knee-high deck built even with the bottom of the window, and I remember but one casualty. One afternoon Mother was helping in the store and waiting on three Indian women. They were the multiple wives of a Comanche living in our trade territory, and were regular store customers.

Mother and Dad made no effort to learn any Comanche, and they much preferred to have me wait on the Indian trade. At the time, I was busy on the grocery side of the store, but I was keeping an eye on her efforts to wait on the three Comanche women. We kept a number of yardsticks on each counter, so that an Indian could point to what he wanted when we didn't understand him. By custom, each wife bought for herself and her children, paying for each article as she bought it. When it came Wife Number Three's turn, Mother began having trouble.

She was the youngest of the three, and would have been the homeliest even if she hadn't lost one of her eyes. Through one of the mysteries of the world of genes, her one child, a little girl about three, was a beauty by anyone's standards. The other wives of a family always had fun with the wife who was buying. They were apparently offering free advice that was neither sought nor appreciated. They bantered back and forth, but I never knew what was being said. As far as I was able to tell, the Indian women spoke a language of their own—at least they had a different vocabulary. I was soon able to follow the men when they talked, but as it was generally expressed, "No savvy squaw talk."

I was sure Number Three was trying deliberately to be difficult. Maybe she was only trying to show off for the other two wives and for some Comanche women sitting in chairs back by the stove. We never took the stove down when spring came, as there was no suitable place to store it. It took up less space in place than elsewhere. Number Three continually refused to use the yardstick Mother tried to hand her, and by motions insisted Mother lay more bolts of calico on the counter.

32:-Gilles O.K-3 (1902-c.1910) 1974
NO6 Comanche NO6
Oklahoma

Finally, apparently losing her temper, the one-eyed squaw started mouthing, ran to the south end of the counter, rounded the end, and started back north toward where Mother was standing. Mother, realizing the squaw's intentions, began mimicking her mouthings, picked up her skirts slightly with either hand, as I had seen her do a thousand times when shooing chickens or helping with the livestock around the farm, charged directly toward the little Indian woman.

Mother's mouthing was just as loud and just as unintelligible as was the squaw's, and for an instant it looked as though the irrisistible force was about to collide with the immovable object. Then suddenly Number Three braked to a stop and began running backward. Mother gave her no time to turn around.

Abruptly, the trail ended for the back-peddling intruder—she reached the little window deck where Mother's flowers sat. It was as I have said, knee-high, and the cactus sat on the squaw's side. There was nothing left for the frightened Indian woman to do but sit down, and she sat with all her accumulated momentum directly upon Mother's cactus.

I never decided which arose first, the homely little squaw or her shrieks of pain. At the first shriek, the other wives ran to her rescue. A counter-top showcase hid Mother and the shrieking Indian woman. For all they knew, Mother might be murdering their companion.

When the other wives saw what had happened, they began screaming also, but theirs were screams of laughter. Close behind the wives came the other Comanche women who were sitting around the stove, and their peals of laughter added to the bedlam.

From time to time I have read stories having to do with the stoicism of the American Indians and their ability to repress emotions—remaining indifferent to either pleasure or pain. But I assure you, this repression doesn't include an already excited squaw, clad in a calico *pit-sa-quina*, who unexpectedly sits on a cactus. Neither did it extend to the several Comanche women present in the store when she had her mishap. The little one-eyed Indian woman's shrieks of anguish were what you would expect to hear, even from a sedate white woman, under similar circumstances. And the gales of merriment loosed by the other Comanche women present equaled what you would expect from a group of white women laughing at a companion involved in a like predicament.

Certainly, the victim's face registered a mixture of fear and pain

32: Gilles O,X-3 (1902-c.1910) 1974
NO6 Comanche NO6
Oklahoma

Sometimes Mo-cho-rook would butcher a steer and bring at least part of it into town to sell. More properly, I should say to let people buy it. The extreme selling effort he made was to pull the tarpaulin back so that you could see the meat if you walked up. He hauled the meat in the back end of a small hack, or spring wagon, and I assume he took home whatever he failed to sell and dried it.

When you showed him the cut you wanted, he waited until you showed him how much money you had; then he would cut your meat, with an apparently very sharp hunting knife that had about an eight-inch blade. He had no scale to weigh your meat, nor did he have anything to wrap it in. You carried your meat to your home in your hand, unless you had the foresight to bring something to wrap it in. He gave you good value for your money. I recall weighing his meat only once, and it ran about five cents a pound. This was about half what a white butcher would have charged you, had there been a white butcher around.

Fresh meat was hard to get. There was no ice for the first two or three years, and a butcher didn't have much leeway in warm weather. Meat had to be sold the first day. We were entirely dependent on people who would bet that they could sell a beef out before it spoiled. Generally speaking, you only got to buy fresh meat on Saturdays, when there were the most people in town.

I was making every effort to gain a working knowledge of the Comanche language, and whenever I had a friendly Indian in the store I would be writing down the names of things and acquiring useful phrases. Several months passed before I had learned enough so that I could ask some of the old fellows about Mo-cho-rook. The young men didn't care to discuss him. It could have been that they felt he was Bad Medicine.

One day I braced an old chap who was in a talking humor. We were in a comfortable spot, and we worried the subject for a couple of hours. He knew about as much English as I knew Comanche. Obviously, much of the vocabulary that I had accumulated around the store was useless in this conversation. Later I was to talk to numerous others, and ultimately an old squaw man helped me to edit, or arrange it properly, in my mind.

I asked my friend, "Oshey-him Mo-cho-rook? He no Comanche." Oshey-him may be translated as "Who is?" "What is?" or "Where is?" according to the way it is used, circumstances, etc. I think the most